

over them, yet it also loves fantastic scenes, and acts in which the limitations of reality are left behind and imaginary luck and joy are represented, — such as magical transformations, fairy tales, and realms of bliss. Extremes of realism and phantasm meet in the folk drama. After the fifth century the sense of societal decline and loss was strong in the popular mind. It was felt that the world was failing. There was a contempt for life.¹ Pagan society was ennuye. " It wanted to laugh. It wanted games and dances to make gay the last hours which separated it from its fall."² Salvianus says that the Roman world died laughing.³

639. Effects of vicious amusements. Vicious amusements provoke all kinds of vicious passions. Excitement, sensuality, frivolity, and meanness go together. Lecky⁴ points out the contrast between the conduct of the Romans of the time of Marius, who refused to plunder the houses of the opposing faction when Marius threw them open, and that of the Romans of the time of Vespasian, who enjoyed the fun and plunder of his war with Vitellius in the streets of Rome. " The moral condition of the empire is, indeed, in some respects one of the most appalling pictures on record."

640. Gladiatorial games. The mores of the Romans of the third century B.C. (sec. 624) seized upon the gladiatorial contests as something suited to the genius of the Roman people, and, as the Romans gained wealth and power by conquest and plunder, with numerous war captives, they developed the sport of the arena to a very high point. Then the sport reacted on the mores and made them more cruel, licentious, and cowardly. It

required more and more extravagant inventions to
produce the
former degree of pleasure. The Romans were
fond of all torture
and showed great invention in connection with
it, both for
beasts and men. Children amused
themselves by torturing
beasts and insects, making them draw loads, and
making fowls
and birds fight. They loved the sight of pain
and bloodshed

¹ Schmidt, *La Societe Civile dans le Monde jfcomain*, 113.

² *Ibid.*, 101.

⁸ *De Gubernat. Dei.*, **VII.**

* *Eur. Morals*, I, 264.